United Nations A/60/153

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 July 2005

Original: English

Sixtieth session
Item 99 (e) of the provisional agenda*
Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

During the reporting period, from July 2004 to June 2005, the Centre operated under enormous uncertainty owing to a persistent lack of necessary voluntary contributions to support its activities.

Despite the continued financial difficulties experienced during the reporting period, the Centre was able to, largely due to the dedication of its staff, accomplish a number of activities in the four priority areas endorsed in 1999 by the African Group of States, namely peace and security; arms control and disarmament; research, information and publication; and cooperation with regional organizations and civil society.

The Centre continued to promote and support the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as the provisions relating to transparency in the flows of small arms and light weapons, contained in the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, through the project on small arms transparency and control regime in Africa, as well as capacity- and institutional-building for the national commissions/points of contact established by Governments for the implementation of the Programme of Action.

* A/60/150.

05-43684 (E) 120805

The Centre also continued to pursue cooperation with regional and non-governmental organizations in the furtherance of peace, security and disarmament in Africa during the reporting period. That cooperation was in the form of exchange of programmes and information, provision of technical advice and expertise, especially regarding the drafting of concept papers, project documents and conference reports, as well as undertaking field missions. To maximize synergies, the Centre strengthened working relationships with relevant United Nations agencies and programmes, such as the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the United Nations Development Programme, in areas of common interest.

Given the financial crisis of the Centre, which became more acute during the second half of 2004, efforts were made during the past few months by the Department for Disarmament Affairs to identify ways and means of ensuring the operational sustainability of the Centre, with particular attention given to solutions highlighting efficiency and cost-effectiveness, as well as to the demands and needs of the African region.

In that context, the Secretary-General is considering the possibility of consolidating the activities of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa with other United Nations regional operations by co-locating the Centre with the United Nations Office at Nairobi or with the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa. To that end, consultations are currently being undertaken by the Department for Disarmament Affairs with Member States, including donor countries.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/101 of 3 December 2004, by which the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the necessary support to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for better achievements and results, to facilitate close cooperation between the Regional Centre and the African Union, in particular in the areas of peace, security and development, and to continue to assist the Director of the Regional Centre in his efforts to stabilize the financial situation of the Centre, and to report to the Assembly at its sixtieth session on the implementation of the resolution. The report covers the period from July 2004 to June 2005. A financial statement on the status of the Trust Fund for the Centre for the year 2004 is contained in the annex.

II. Functioning of the Centre

2. The Regional Centre was established in 1986 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/151 G of 16 December 1985. Its headquarters is located in Lomé. The Centre functions within the framework of the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, which ensures its supervision and acts as the focal point for coordinating the input of the pertinent organs, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system. The Centre operates on the basis of existing resources within the Secretariat and on voluntary contributions that Member States and other donors offer.

3. During the reporting period, the Centre operated under enormous uncertainty owing to a persistent decline in voluntary contributions in support of its activities. Within its limited financial resources, the Centre continued to implement its programme of work, which was endorsed in 1999 by the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of African States, in the following main areas: peace and security; arms control and disarmament; research, information and publication; and cooperation with regional organizations and civil society.

III. Objectives and activities of the Centre

4. The mandate of the Centre, as contained in General Assembly resolution 40/151 G, is to provide, upon request, substantive support for initiatives and other efforts of the Member States of the African region towards the realization of measures of peace, arms limitation and disarmament in the region, in cooperation with the African Union, as well as coordinate the implementation of regional activities in Africa under the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme.

5. During the period under review, the Centre carried out a number of activities in the above-mentioned four areas.

A. Peace and security

6. Peace and security continued to be a core element of the activities of the Centre. The Centre participated, on 25 January 2005 in Accra, Ghana, in the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which was largely devoted to the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. It provided an opportunity for the Centre to liaise with ECOWAS member States and with representatives of other delegations on the disarmament aspects of the peace process and the possible role the Centre could play.

7. With regard to the Great Lakes region and in particular the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Centre initiated consultations with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Office in Kinshasa for the deployment of a one-month mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with a view to reviewing and advising on the pursuit of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process that had been launched in the context of the peace process in that country.

8. During the reporting period, the Centre continued to follow up on the implementation of the project entitled "Promotion of civil-military relations in Africa: a factor of peace and security", launched in 2001 in cooperation with the African Union. As a result, a draft code of conduct for armed and security forces in Africa was developed, which was submitted to the Commission of the African Union for consideration. In that connection, the Centre, together with the Commission of the African Union and other partners, especially the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces and the Friedrich Erbert Foundation, are currently working towards launching a process to have the draft code of conduct adopted by the African Union. The process will include a governmental expert and ministerial meeting, and the publication and dissemination of the draft code, as appropriate.

9. In connection with that project, the Centre also launched two pilot surveys in Togo: one on the perception of the armed and security forces by the civilian population; and the other on the perception of the civilian population by the armed and security forces. Similar surveys are envisaged for other countries in Africa, the outcomes of which are intended to serve as a basis for the formulation of action-oriented pro[illegible]mmes to address areas of tension between the civilian population and the military, particularly in emerging democracies in Africa.

10. The Centre completed work on the parliamentary defence committees training course for West Africa through the publication and dissemination of the final report and training modules. Efforts are currently being made to organize similar workshops, with the support of donors and other partners for parliamentary defence committees in the Central African subregion, on such defence-related matters as the formulation of defence policies, the adoption of defence budgets and military programming.

11. To promote mainstreaming gender in peace and disarmament, the Centre initiated, in collaboration with the Togolese Association of Business Women, a dialogue process between women's groups and the Government in the search for common solutions to peace and security in the country. In that context, the Centre assisted the Association in the elaboration of a project proposal for the organization

of a conference on the role of women in the maintenance of peace and security in Togo.

B. Arms control and disarmament

12. During the reporting period, the Centre maintained contacts and exchanged information on the adherence to and implementation of multilateral disarmament agreements related to weapons of mass destruction by countries in the African region with intergovernmental organizations and specialized agencies concerned, such as the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

13. The Centre also supported the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as the African Union-sponsored Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

14. Support of the Centre for the implementation of the Programme of Action in Africa was provided through the small arms transparency and control regime in Africa (SATCRA) project, and capacity and institutional-building for the national commissions/points of contact established by Governments for the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Small arms transparency and control regime in Africa project

15. The SATCRA project was launched in October 2003 in collaboration with the Commission of the African Union as a regional pilot project. The project, financed by the Governments of Finland and Sweden, brings together the following 10 countries, which have agreed to build, on a voluntary basis, a transparency regime on matters pertaining to the licit flows of small arms and light weapons: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Djibouti, Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Togo. The main objective of this project is to encourage openness and transparency in the transfers of small arms and light weapons and to strengthen the capacities of the participating States in the application of effective measures that prevent the diversion of such weapons from licit to illicit domains. The project has three main priority areas of activities: (a) the promotion of transparency by building consensus around the concept and by adopting common effective operational policies and measures; (b) the establishment of national inventories on the production capacities of small arms and light weapons in the participating States, with a view to documenting and assessing the qualitative and quantitative capacities of the local and, in most cases, artisan producers of firearms; and (c) the establishment and maintenance of a regional arms register as well as a database on small arms and light weapons. With regard to the second priority area, while the aim is not the abolition of the production of firearms, which has played an important role in the cultures of some of the countries involved in the SATCRA project, the participating States agreed that the establishment of national inventories would enable the adoption or reinforcement of regulatory measures for the enhancement of the control of the local manufactures.

16. In July 2004, the Centre organized, in collaboration with the Government of Mali and the Commission of the African Union, a workshop of experts on transparency and small arms control in Africa. The workshop, held in Bamako, brought together the SATCRA participating States, relevant United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and individual experts. Building on the national consultations which the Centre had conducted in the SATCRA-participating States prior to the conference, participants adopted an operational definition of the concept of transparency and the various cooperative modalities within the SATCRA project. The conference also agreed on the following categories of data for the arms register: importation, exportation; manufacture, holdings, collection and destruction, donations, licenses, and surpluses. The participating States also agreed on the following time lines for the submission of data to the Centre: 31 December 2004: partial submission; 31 March 2005: full submission; 1 May 2005: posting of report by the Centre.

17. During the Bamako workshop, the Centre also conducted a two-day training workshop for the members of the national commissions/points of contact of the participating States on modern techniques and skills for data collection, data processing and reporting. The objective was to enhance the effectiveness of those national institutions on matters relating to the implementation of the project in the respective participating States.

18. In close cooperation with its partners, including the African Union, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the South Africa-based Institute for Security Studies, the Centre elaborated the terms of reference and the operational framework and guidelines for conducting the national inventories on the local capacities for the production of small arms and light weapons in the participating States of the SATCRA project. In cooperation with the national focal points, it identified a national consultant in each of the participating States, recruited within the framework of the SATCRA project, to conduct the inventory over a period of three months. Between March and June 2005, field missions were deployed to those countries with the primary objective of launching the inventory process and discussing the administrative modalities and the working methodology with the national consultant. Those missions also offered an opportunity for the Centre to consult with the Governments of the participating States on their role in the inventory process, including the required follow-up measures that should be put in place.

19. With regard to the establishment of the regional register on small arms and light weapons, the Centre initiated work related to designing the blueprint and format of the register as well as the reporting forms.

Capacity-building for and establishment of national commissions/points of contact for the implementation of the Programme of Action

20. During the reporting period, the Centre received requests from a number of national commissions for the organization of training workshops aimed at enhancing the operational and substantive skills of their members on practical disarmament matters. In that context, training modules and courses were developed for the national commissions of Cameroon, Nigeria and Togo. Preparatory work, including the identification of trainers and fund-raising activities, will be initiated for the organization of those workshops in the second half of 2005.

21. In April 2005, the Centre, together with the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of UNDP, and UNIDIR, participated in a mission to six countries in Southern Africa: Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The objective of that mission was to raise awareness and build the capacity of the participating States of national reporting on the implementation of the Programme of Action. Specifically, the mission was able to evaluate the issue of small arms and light weapons in the region from individual country perspectives, brief the Governments on the Programme of Action and its various provisions, reiterate the necessity for States to submit national reports, inform on the process of data collection, processing and reporting, and facilitate information exchange within and among countries.

C. Research, information and publication

22. The Centre continued to encourage research activities in the areas of peace and disarmament through: (a) the maintenance of its specialized library; (b) an internship for research within and outside Africa; and (c) in-house research projects: a project on the arms embargoes and sanctions in Africa and a study on the illicit routes and caches of weapons in Africa.

23. Two issues of the Centre's quarterly newsletter, *African Peace Bulletin*, were published and disseminated, as were two conference reports on the themes "parliamentary defence committees training workshop for ECOWAS member States" and "transparency in the flows of small arms and light weapons in Africa".

D. Cooperation with regional organizations and civil society

24. During the reporting period, the Centre pursued cooperation with regional and non-governmental organizations in the furtherance of peace, security and disarmament in Africa. That cooperation was in the form of exchange of programmes and information and provision of technical advice and expertise, in particular regarding the drafting of concept papers, project documents and conference reports.

25. The Centre continued discussions with the Commission of the African Union (AU) on the operational difficulties of the Centre, which aimed at identifying specific areas of cooperation, with a view to finalizing the draft memorandum of understanding on the cooperation between the two institutions, supporting the establishment of the AU Small Arms Unit and reviewing and adopting the draft code of conduct for the Armed and Security Forces in Africa, previously submitted to the Commission.

26. The Centre provided advice and expertise to ECOWAS on the implementation of the moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of light weapons in West Africa, particularly in the context of assisting ECOWAS to formulate a draft regional convention which would ultimately replace the moratorium as a legally binding instrument. In that connection, the Centre collaborated with Oxfam Great Britain and Oxfam America in harnessing the support of civil society organizations, journalists and media organizations in West Africa around an international Arms Trade Treaty, proposed by the United Kingdom.

27. The Centre also provided additional support for the review and adoption of the project proposal for the establishment of the ECOWAS Small Arms Unit and the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme, the successor project to the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development in Africa.

28. The Centre maintained working relations with the secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), particularly with regard to the implementation of the ECCAS Programme of Priority Activities for the Implementation of the Programme of Action in the Central African subregion. In May 2005, the Centre visited ECCAS to review specific areas of joint action in the implementation process. The Secretary-General of ECCAS requested the Centre's technical assistance in the organization of a meeting of ECCAS governmental experts to review the Programme of Priority Activities. The elaboration of a regional legally binding instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in the subregion was discussed, and it was agreed that the governmental experts meeting would consider the proposal formally.

29. In an effort to reinforce ECCAS capacities in the implementation of the Programme of Action, in September 2004, the Centre supported the organization of a workshop in Bujumbura, Burundi, sponsored by the Institute for Security Studies.

30. The Centre shared information on disarmament matters and provided technical expertise to several civil society organizations working in the areas of peace, security and disarmament in and outside Togo, including women's groups such as the Association of Togolese Business Women.

IV. The operational situation of the Centre

A. The financial situation

31. Financial resources of the Centre operations have been dwindling steadily over the years. While some limited funds were received for the execution of projects, unfortunately, contributions in support of the operational costs of the Centre were not forthcoming. Those costs are related to maintenance expenses and salaries for the local staff and security.

32. Against the backdrop of the financial crisis of the Centre, which became more acute during the second half of 2004, extensive fund-raising activities were carried out by the Director of the Centre. Those activities consisted principally of missions, correspondence, audiences, other bilateral meetings and consultations with African Government representatives as well as with non-African countries, on the margins of regional conferences. The Director also kept the Commission of the African Union apprised of the operational difficulties of the Centre.

33. During the reporting period, voluntary contributions in the amount of US$ 645,244 were received. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Governments of Austria, Finland, France and Namibia for their financial contributions to and support for the activities of the Centre, and to the Government of Togo, the host country, for its overall support of the Centre and its financial contributions. Information on the status of the Trust Fund for the Centre for the year 2004 is contained in the annex to the present report.

34. Pursuant to the consideration by the General Assembly of the Secretary-General's proposals for strengthening the security and safety of United Nations operations, staff and premises, funds have been allotted again from the regular budget to ensure that the Centre was in full compliance with the minimum operating security standards.

35. Bearing in mind the persistent precarious financial situation of the Centre, the Department for Disarmament Affairs held a series of consultations last autumn with Member States on the state of affairs of the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament and ways to improve their effectiveness. Specifically, during the fifty-ninth session of the First Committee, at an informal meeting devoted to this issue, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs informed the Committee of the difficulties — financial and logistical — faced by the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. At the same time, the Centres also faced the additional challenge of increased security requirements. In that connection, it was mentioned that the persisting precarious financial situation of the Regional Centre in Africa was compelling the Department to consider relocating temporarily its operations.

36. In December 2004, the Government of Togo made a special financial contribution aimed at enabling the Centre to maintain its operation in Lomé until the time when substantial financial support would be firmly committed to ensuring a multi-year sustainable operation.

37. During the past few months, the Department for Disarmament Affairs continued to focus its efforts on identifying ways and means of ensuring the operational sustainability of the Centre, with particular attention given to solutions highlighting efficiency and cost-effectiveness, as well as to the demands and needs of the African region.

38. In that context, the Secretary-General is currently considering the possibility of consolidating the activities of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa with other United Nations regional operations by co-locating the Centre with the United Nations Office at Nairobi or with the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa. To that end, the Department for Disarmament Affairs is currently undertaking consultations with Member States, including donor countries. At the same time, the Department, together with the Centre, is in the process of identifying projects that would respond to the needs of the region and finding the necessary financial support from the donor community. The implementation of such projects would contribute to revitalizing the Centre's activities and its relevance for the region.

B. Staffing

39. Insufficient resources to cover the operational costs have hampered the effective functioning of the Centre and impacted on the staffing situation. During the reporting period, the Centre therefore continued to operate with a skeleton staff comprising, in addition to the Director, an associate expert, funded by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, and locally recruited staff — one officer recruited to implement the SATCRA project and seven temporary General Service personnel. The staffing situation has been compounded by the

unpredictability of financial resources, which makes it impossible for the staff to be offered longer-term contracts.

40. Within the framework of the SATCRA project, 10 short-term national consultants have been recruited for three months in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Djibouti, Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Togo.

V. Conclusion

41. During the reporting period, the Centre continued to carry out its mandate under very strenuous financial and operational difficulties, which were aggravated by the security challenge it faced in the host country.

42. The activities and staffing of the Centre have been reduced during the reporting period in an effort to operate the Centre within the available limited resources. Notwithstanding, the future of the Centre looks bleak, as there is no foreseeable reliable source of funding that would ensure the operational sustainability of the Centre. Consolidating the activities of the Centre with existing United Nations regional operations appears to provide a solution to the current challenge, allow for better use of synergies, increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and most important, enable the Centre to fulfil its mandate in responding to the demands and needs of Africa in the field of peace and disarmament.

43. At the same time, there is a need to undertake a thorough review of the Centre's programme of activities, with a view to developing medium- and long-term projects to address the demands and needs of the countries in the region and ensuring reliable adequate funding for them. The consultations with Member States and donor countries carried out by the Department for Disarmament Affairs at the request of the Secretary-General with regard to co-locating the Centre are being undertaken parallel to such a review.

Annex

Status of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for the year 2004

	United States dollars
Fund balance, 31 December 2003	445 095
Income, 1 January-31 December 2004	
Voluntary contributions[a]	528 023
Interest income	8 118
Other/miscellaneous income	2 875
Subtotal	**984 111**
Expenditures, 1 January-31 December 2004	588 224
Fund balance, 31 December 2004	**395 887**

Note: Information based on the statement of income and expenditure for the twelve-month period of the biennium 2004-2005 ending 31 December 2004.

[a] In 2004, contributions were received from: Austria ($10,000), Finland ($219,074), France ($94,979), Namibia ($1,000) and Togo ($202,970). During the period from 1 January to 30 June 2005, additional contributions totalling $117,251 were received from France ($98,953) and Togo ($18,298).